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The Reorganization of the Republican Party

by

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Member of the

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TO VINU
ABSTRACT

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

I.

(1) The above in one form or another has been the subject of much printed discussion during the last year and a half. Men of high political and official prominence in the United States have ably contributed to this discussion and given much of value to the public.

The serious consideration of the subject as an active, positive proposition carries with it an admission of the weakness of the present organization of the Republican party. Nothing needs reorganization if its present organization be worthy, fitting and adequate. Prima facie, then, that so many men prominent in the Republican party itself have contributed to this discussion seems to make the case against the present organization of this party. Probably the most notable of such contributions are the recent articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* by Ex-President William H. Taft and by United States Senator Albert B. Cummins.

Aside from the party weakness revealed in these articles, that a political party, since 1860, easily the most conspicuous and most meritorious in America in shaping the policies and in carrying out the myriad of measures which have so greatly aided in building up the power and prosperity of the United States, and a party nationally supreme in 1908 with abundant majorities, should descend to third place in 1912, be able to carry only two small states for its presidential candidates and to poll approximately 3,500,000 votes from an estimated 9,000,000 of Republican voters is presumptive evidence of a fundamental weakness of organization or management in this great party.

(2) However this political situation is viewed, the writer is very confident it is not begging the question by assuming a condition from a given state of facts, possibly unjustified, if the query is made, why this great change in conditions, this revulsion, or revolution, in public sentiment? The greater num-

ber of articles written have assumed that some other method of representation in Republican national conventions is the essential feature. Several have painted in vivid colors upon the canvas of the public press the apparent injustice of permitting the southern states, having in a number of them only a modicum of Republican strength, a representation often greater than that of strong Republican states of the north.

Senator Cummins in his article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, date of November 15th, 1913, wrote, "How did it happen that the outcome of the convention both as to platform and as to nominations did not fairly represent the opinions and desires of the majority of the millions who composed the Republican party? There is no need to seek long or far for an answer. It is known to all men. It springs right at you. The Convention of 1912 was not a representative body in any just sense. It could not and did not speak for these millions of Republicans. In times like these, at any rate, if nine or ten millions of men are to be held together by a bond of common purpose, the very least requirement is that the purpose shall be declared by a majority and each voter must feel that he has had a fair chance, which means an equal voice in the council in which his representative sits. * * * These facts have been stated not for the purpose of censuring anybody, for the basis now condemned was adopted by Republicans who have long since passed away and on account of conditions which have long since disappeared. It is not material to inquire into the motives of the men responsible for it, or the sufficiency of the reasons which led them to their conclusion, nor need we recite the efforts that have been made in various conventions to bring about a change. The vital thing is to know thoroughly and feel deeply that such injustice must cease and that a successful party under such a system is impossible.

Representation so unequal would have ended in disaster, even though every question relating to the title of delegates to seats in national conventions had been decided with the highest judicial impartiality; but the fairness of courts is not to be expected in the stress and storm of political campaigns and so it has happened that in many conventions, and especially in the

last one, the claims of contesting delegates have been adjudged mainly with reference to their views respecting the candidates for the presidential nomination. * * * The tremendous mistake that a very considerable number of good men have made, and are making, is in their assumption that the well-known differences in the political views of certain distinguished and semi-distinguished Republicans who have heretofore been somewhat conspicuous in the affairs of the country are conclusive proof that there are like differences in the rank and file of the party. The thing to do is to submit all these questions to the Convention of 1916, a convention that must be brought together under such rules as not only will insure a decent equality of representation, but will guarantee that the delegates chosen by the Republicans of a state shall actually take part in the convention to which they are accredited; rules that will respect the primary laws of the states that have them, and for the states that have none, provide a better, fairer method of settling contests."

It is commonly accepted that the only present, adequate method of expression for a national party as a party on matters political is through its representatives at its national conventions. If this representation be inadequate, incomplete or unjust, dissatisfaction, and maybe disruption in the party, are sure to follow. A kind of "taxation without representation" spirit will pervade the members. The spirit of freedom, of justice and of progress essential to success in a great party will be lacking in connection with its work.

But a great party is not what any one man or group of men declares it to be. It may not be what the national platform of the party declares it to be. It is what the majority of the rank and file of the party all over the country declare it to be on those occasions when they may express themselves. Under a national primary law, the work of national conventions will be considerably taken from them.

Query; Is an alteration, however radical, of the method, or manner, of electing and seating delegates to the national conventions of a political party a "reorganization" of that party? Possibly, but probably not. At any rate, the changes suggested by Senator Cummins and by all others that have publicly ex-

pressed themselves upon this subject so far as known to the writer of this article are not in his opinion sufficiently profound and fundamental to be characterized accurately as "a reorganization of the Republican party."

II.

The question of importance here is not how such changes as have been suggested and named shall be classified, which is merely a play upon words; but rather do these proposed changes reach the fundamental causes which in particular have produced the startling transformation in the condition of this great party?

Granted that, as the writer believes was the case, the Republican National Convention of 1912 was not made up on a basis of representation, accurate or just, and that the contested seats were usually filled not on the merits as to right in the body of that convention but rather on the question as to how delegates would vote for candidates for president in case they should reach the body of the convention. Great as is the impropriety and injustice entailed in this kind of representation and in this manner of seating delegates and great as was the national dissatisfaction resulting from the action of this now historic convention, first, do these justify the members of that party in administering upon its own all along its notably strong lines a defeat stinging and humiliating and in rejecting in toto its party tenets, hitherto regarded by many with a respect that almost touches the border-land of veneration? Second, whether the action of this convention upon disputed seats therein was justified or not, and whether it was rightly constituted or not, was the formation and manner of seating delegations of the Convention of 1912 the actual reason for the trailing in the dust of the banner of Republicanism? Especially because it is remembered that the manner of electing delegates to Republican National Conventions has been unchanged for many years, the writer unhesitatingly answers the first query in the negative. To the second query, the same answer is given.

III.

What was the cause, or were the causes, contributing most prominently to the defeat and rejection named and what in brief

is the remedy to avoid occurrences of like character in the future?

(1) The Progressive party was born in the rejection of the action of the Republican National Convention of 1912. The Progressive platform is radical, almost startlingly so in some propositions, yet its national candidates received more votes than those of the Republican party. Was the overwhelming defeat of the Republican party due in large degree to its lack of advocacy of measures really progressive and beneficial in a time and age when men and nations are moving fast in the creation and adoption of almost numberless enactments genuinely of great value to the public?

Ex-President Taft in his article in the *Saturday Post* of date February 14th, 1914, stated "The Republican party is in favor of all police legislation intended to secure proper tenements for the poor, to prevent the employment of children at too early an age, to secure proper hygienic conditions for the community and especially for wage earners as they work; to remedy any situation where circumstances have offered a temptation to the employee to needless danger, to put the employee on an equality of negotiation with the employer, so that through organization and arbitration and in other ways the employee may secure equitable terms; to secure workmen's compensation in case of injury, by which the risk in dangerous occupations carried on for the benefit of the public shall be borne primarily by the employer as incident to his business and ultimately by the people, who shall pay in the increased price of his product the equivalent of such risk—and, indeed, of all practical, so-called collective legislation of this general character." A glance at several recent national platforms of the Republican party fairly supports Mr. Taft in his statement as to most, if not all, of these subjects for which his party is alleged to stand.

The Progressive party spread its platform over much ground and included many subjects never before comprised in a national party platform. It included many subjects for national advocacy which must be settled by the states alone singly. Its advocacy of woman's suffrage, of a recall of public officials, somewhat indefinite in form, of the initiative and the referendum caught the fancy of the discontented, of the unsuccessful and the

ultra-democratic as well as of those of the Republican party dissatisfied with it. This platform appealed also to the men and women everywhere regardless of condition who believe in equality and justice under the law.

Some of its measures have found an enduring place in American politics and American policies. Thus, woman's suffrage is to be enacted into the statutes of every state, as is some form of the initiative and the referendum. The spirit of this platform is not socialistic or revolutionary but rather that of the sincere seeker after truth and righteousness in matters governmental.

The great majority of those who supported Roosevelt and Johnson in 1912 were not fanatics or irrationals. They were of the men and women who believe that if democracy be a good thing, then the more we have of it under a republican form of government the better, and that, if for some it be very good, pure and undefiled, then this type, so far as our form of government will permit, is the kind we all need and have long sought.

(2) What is the true and correct function of government has, of course, for always been a mooted question. An agency should in every instance be definite, precise and well understood by principal and agent. This agency, called government, which we all create and establish and perpetuate at such tremendous cost, we should all accurately apprehend and understand. We should know what we expect from it and make it do for us all that we contract. The agency must be exclusive; i. e., we can have only one at any one time. The agents who act for us under the contract we make with ourselves must know what we expect from them and just what this contract demands of them. They should be worthy of their hire and also worthy of their employers. Aside from whatever pay they receive, as citizens they work for themselves as well as for us. We have full power to extend the scope of this agency as we find it reasonable and expedient.

In other phrase, the question is just what and how much do we want others to do for us in matters political and governmental. The most of us really do not know. We dread changes in matters of government. We fear the cost, but most

of all we fear that our agents may forget we are principals and may override and oppress us, their masters, as so many times has happened. We create a legislative innovation, then wait almost in alarm for the result from our own creation. The apparent truism here needs to be written that the true function of government is to give us all we can obtain of benefits through this kind of agency.

We could do all the work of government individually or in small groups, but there are too many of us, so we require the concentrated, concerted, highly intelligent action of large numbers to obtain the results needful to a people gregarious and multitudinous. Parties are formed primarily to ascertain the most desirable in governmental functions, then to try to put these into operation. Primarily, too, parties are for the benefit of the whole people; really, they are often a medium to further the ambitions of a few. Primarily, again, and analytically, they are solely a means to an end.

We often merge and confound them with the end. This is because of lack of careful analysis, habitual with many. It is, further, because of the habit of the centuries, which has become an unfortunate, disastrous custom, to elevate matters governmental above their correct positions. It is not many years ago that an emperor of Germany stated publicly upon his accession to the throne that he obtained his authority to rule from God Almighty and from no one else. The people of his country were solely to blame for the conditions producing this statement. But they knew no better and the custom of the centuries was the child of ignorance in the people and of a desire in the rulers to create awe and reverence in those they wished to rule that their own positions might be safer.

When Russian soldiers fight and die on the battle-field, they are usually actuated not so much by patriotism, pure and simple, as by the thought that the "Little Father" of Russia demands the sacrifice and that their lives are forfeit to his will. Here again, a people have almost deified that which they created. They are but little wiser than the east Indian who fashions the clay image, then bows down before the work of his own hands. Close analysis in matters of government has been almost as rare

as in matters of religion. The transitory, subservient means are merged in the expected, desired end. There is nothing holy, sacred or sanctimonious in a government. Like the clay with which we make the image, we may mould and shape it as we will. Nor is there anything sacred or sanctimonious in the men who connect themselves with governments, usually to satisfy personal ambitions.

(3) A few years ago we were beginning to place parties—the mere temporary association of men for expediency—upon an elevation dangerous to our intelligence and political safety. If the mission of the Progressive party has stopped with this, it has done an excellent work in teaching the members of the Republican party that it was composed of men, that it lived but in name and was valuable simply as it might serve those who lived in the country where it had this kind of being.

More, the principles of the Progressive party, nailed audaciously on the front door of public opinion, have moved the people to demand and to have works of their public agents. The other parties are zealous to be regarded as highly “progressive.” No candidate for a public office, but, at least in an indefinite degree, is “progressive.”

The Republican party had its origin in the storm and strife of impending rebellion through the demand for a party that should stand in the name of the people against the political theories of one section which would upbuild the aristocracy of the slave owner as the type of an American citizen. It maintained that the national government had the power to control slavery in the territories and that the government should prevent its further extension. It stood for a protective tariff, for internal improvements and a system of national bank currency. It was the party of the common people, of the everyday man. As such it led in fighting the war of the Rebellion, in reconstructing the states and in reestablishing our currency on January 1st, 1879. The era of prosperity and development under the very wise rule of the Republican party has been without parallel in the history of any other country.

But many of the men, prominent in the Republican party, have been content to rest much upon the past. The marvelous

history of the country and its progress under Republicanism, the great work of the party in fighting the war and in upbuilding our industries under a protective tariff have been until a few years the themes of Republican orators in every campaign. The vital questions of labor and of capital, of limitations on the power of monopolizing corporations and of increased participation by the people directly in government have been too often passed over by both the two great parties merely with resolutions in their party platforms.

Again, the taint of official unfaithfulness has attached itself to a number of men high in the ranks of Republicanism. The alleged connection of Senator Foraker, of Senator Hanna, Senator Penrose, Congressman Jo. Sibley of Pennsylvania and of other prominent Republicans with Standard Oil in an improper manner and the expulsion of Senator Lorimer from the United States Senate for buying his way into office injured very much the party to which these men belonged. The odor of suspicion connected itself with many of the great leaders of the Republican party.

The administration of President Taft intensified this. He was elected under the supposition that in policy he was another Roosevelt. The promises of the Republican platform of 1908 were not kept in the legislation of the Payne Aldrich Tariff Act and in the later vetoes by President Taft of the attempted revision by honest, progressive Republicans of the woolen schedule. He repeatedly termed this schedule an "indefensible" outrage, but twice in one year he stood between the people and substantial relief from the oppression of these duties and finally rejected a bill drawn on the protective lines advocated by the Republican party in 1908. His reciprocity treaty with Canada was for the benefit of the manufacturer but not for the benefit of the farmer. His lack of support of Dr. Wiley in his administration of the pure food law laid him open to general criticism. The alleged connection of Secretary of the Interior Ballinger with the Guggenheims in Alaska coal deals brought considerable suspicion and censure upon the administration. Also, every progressive Republican seeking reelection to Congress was made to feel that the powerful influence of the National administration was cast against him.

These factors in the official service of President Taft served to a considerable extent to overcome, or neutralize, the positive excellencies of his work, notable in favor of international arbitration, the Working Man's Liability Law, the Postal Savings Bank and a Parcel Post.

Moreover, in the Middle West had arisen a new order of public servants and so a new order of public service, La Follette and Dolliver, Cummins and Bristow, Beveridge and Hadley, Clapp, Murdock and Borah and a few others with them were templars that stood always in the ring and, wearing the cross of the only true faith, were ever ready to break a lance against the enemies of political truth and righteousness. For them no project too hazardous, no work of toil too arduous, no sacrifice too great connected with the public advantage and service.

Senator La Follette has made his "Weekly" of wide circulation. He advocates new measures for the public benefit constantly and earnestly. His work bears the "Guinea Stamp" of an almost fearful research and care. He spares neither friend nor foe in his cold, pitiless analysis of conditions and men. Yet by endowment and acquisition he possesses a sterling common sense on most matters and the wisdom to know and choose aright. His paper has tremendous educative power and influence, especially in the central part of the United States.

A new political thought and attitude arose. Men saw that these agents of the public just indicated, though of great ability and industry, were not leaders of the Republican party in Congress or out. They noted that when these representatives of theirs who were senators spoke from the floor in advocacy of measures of vital public importance, the Republican leaders in the Senate absented themselves from attendance and that the utmost of endeavor in reproof and repression was used by these same leaders against the senators of the people striving to reach the best for those in whose interest they held office, worked and wrought.

The people of the country came to believe that the Republican administration and the leaders of the party were out of touch with them. The majority of the rank and file of the party believed that party platforms were meaningless and deceptive

and that, though many measures were enacted beneficial to the people, when issue was made over a measure as between the public good and the good of those, rather indefinitely characterized as "the interests," the latter almost invariably received the preference. Many Republicans felt they were being betrayed by the men they long had trusted and that a great party name was often but a pretense to deception and fraud.

Still again, the accession of Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency was heralded as unwelcome to the leaders of the Republican party on the ground that he was "unsafe," yet most men failed to note that this "unsafeness" consisted in anything else than energy, determination and honesty in the public service. During the seven years of his administration of the office the interests of the many as opposed to the interests of the few, which had been exemplified in the preceding administration in the person of Mark Hanna, received adequate attention. The majority of the people recognized that they had a man of their own at the head of the nation and resolved to elect no other kind thereafter. The sharp contrast between his administration and that of President Taft added to the disappointment and disaffection of Republicans and gave further cause and occasion for the tremendous votes in 1912 for Wilson and Marshall and for Roosevelt and Johnson.

The people noted, also, that the man, who more than any other dominated the Republican National Convention of 1912 and the Republican National Campaign of that year, was Boss Barnes, who lays tribute upon vice and crime in his own Albany, New York, and makes these pay their tainted shekels into his own coffers, swelled by political corruption. They saw that the man who stood next to Barnes in all this was the notorious Penrose.

The citizens voted in large numbers for Roosevelt and Johnson because they stood actually and honestly for clearer, truer democracy than did the candidates of the Republican party, because they were great leaders, men of action and of power, with the people and of them. Very many regarded these leaders as crusaders fighting under the banner of the faith of the free. Their armor was always on and their lances at rest. Their places always had been in the lists against the enemies of the common,

average man. "The fierce light which beats upon a throne" had not been more intense than that which for many years had been turned upon them. Under this their honesty of public purpose and faithfulness to duty had been determined to be without stain.

(4) Yet Ex-President Taft in the article mentioned, of date February 14th, 1914, wrote "We must direct our energies toward the amendment of the present banking and currency act that shall furnish an elastic medium automatically adjusting itself to the needs of business without giving too arbitrary control to the government; a wise system for conservation of our national resources; the reform of judicial procedure, eliminating its delays and reducing its costs; the greater supervision of the business of, and the issue of securities by, corporations in interstate business and the continued enforcement of the antitrust law; laws providing workmen's compensation for interstate railroad companies and regulating the relations between them and their employees, to prevent strikes, so far as possible and to secure safety in operation for the public and the employees; the taking of all local Federal officers and all but department heads and under secretaries out of politics by putting them in the classified service; the improvement of rivers and harbors by a completed plan and a levee system for the Mississippi; the enactment of model laws for the District of Columbia, as to the control of public utilities; the maintenance of the public health, on the use of child labor, the regulation of tenement house construction, investigation and arbitration of labor disputes and the conduct of vocational education; of playgrounds and of charitable and penal institutions; the enlargement of the Bureau of Education into a means of publishing to the world the exact condition of education in every state with a view to stimulating much needed progress in thorough primary and vocational training; the stimulation of the merchant marine, the creation and maintenance of a permanent tariff commission with adequate power to report the facts as to the operation of the tariff; the adoption of a budget system and a plan for making government administration economical and efficient; the maintenance of an adequate army and navy; the conferring on the Federal government power to perform our

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treaty obligations to aliens by punishing those who violate them; the adoption and pursuit of a foreign policy that shall give us influence to aid China and our American neighbors in maintaining just and peaceful governments.

These are some of the constructive reforms to which the Republican party will address itself when it shall secure again the mandate of the people; but before and of higher importance than all of these is the rescue of the country from the serious danger to which it is exposed in this attempted undermining of our stable, civil liberty."

Nearly all of what Mr. Taft urges is highly desirable for the United States. Place it, just as he expresses it, before the national conventions of the three great political parties in the United States when next they shall gather, and the vote will be overwhelmingly favorable to the adoption of these as "some of the constructive reforms" to which each party is to address itself, as Mr. Taft is to have his party turn, after it has sufficiently "viewed with alarm" the attempt of the people of the United States to obtain a purer, truer democracy.

(5) Therefore, while the new party has gone considerably in advance of the two old parties in advocating constructive legislation giving the people more direct participation in the government, the causes of the overwhelming, ignominious defeat of 1912, which gave the Republican presidential candidates only Utah and Vermont and put the party far down the minority column in Congress, were due rather to men than to party principles, to the records of public agents rather than to a lack of definite, adequate powers given these agents.

The writer, a progressive Republican, who with reluctance supported Roosevelt and Johnson in 1912 and who has since talked with many hundreds of Republicans, Progressives and Democrats in all parts of the United States, suggests, though it be highly at least desirable for the rehabilitation of the Republican party that it be "reorganized," as several—and notably Senator Cummins—have urged, yet more than this, that the ~~men~~^{leaders} of the party must be "reorganized."

An overwhelming majority of the party think right and are right on matters political and governmental. This majority,

TO VINDICATE ABSTENTION

under principles heretofore named, determines the character of the party and for what it actually stands; a few men who by political mischance get into Congress or political leadership in no degree determine this. A genuine "government of the people, by the people and for the people" which, like Christianity, never has been tried except in spots, a majority of the Republican party desire to make real and effective in the United States.

Progressive Republicanism actually means that the people rule, usually through their accredited representatives, but that, where experience has proven it safer or more effective to conduct some part of the machinery of government by direct action of the people, or by final appeal to the people, our form of government was devised and intended to enable this to be done; and that when our fathers framed the Constitution, they planned it to be the medium for the preservation of the liberties of the people, not one for the subversion of their rights under a complexity of routine, behind which the invisible government lurks and controls.

Changes in party platforms and in constitution of national conventions are now but matters of paper and of promise. They reach not the essence of the weakness. The suspicious distrust and unbelief of the citizens of the United States have gone too deep to be reached effectively by these. The voters want to see men put in party prominence whose valor has been tried often and often in their behalf on the great battle-fields of politics and of statesmanship.

Only by the Republican party electing such men to public leadership may it be "reorganized" satisfactorily to those who love its history of achievement, trust its membership and have hope in its future of service to the United States. So only may it be "reorganized" to meet the desires of any honest American citizen looking with careful scrutiny upon the record of events to determine how and for whom he ought to vote at popular elections.

San Francisco, California, May 15, 1914.

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